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Statement submitted by Umuada Igbo Nigeria, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Implementing the post-2015 development agenda: moving from commitment to results

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Report by the Secretary-General are 17 goals. We shall discuss Achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls under 5.6A and 5.6C of the goals.

In commenting on 5.6A it is noted that the National Law in Nigeria is the 1999 Constitution but we have local laws/customary laws. The constitution frowns at discrimination in all its ramifications.

In Igbo land which is the South East of Nigeria, customary law prohibits a woman from inheriting the property of her husband or her father as that is exclusively for the male children. To side step this law one has to make a valid will. Umuada Igbo Nigeria has been fighting this discrimination and has held many workshops/lectures, the last of which was in Enugu in February 2014 during the United Nations Mother Tongue Day. Providentially, in April 2014 the Supreme Court in *Mrs. Lois Ukeje and Anor v. Mrs. Ada Ukeje* (2014) 4SC part 1 page 1, *Onyibor Aniekwe v. Mrs. Maria Nweke* (2014) 4SC Part III page 65 declared the customary law of disinheriting women null and void and in conflict with S.42 of the Constitution, which is the National Law. The Supreme Court after nullifying the customary law held that a widow shall inherit the property of her husband irrespective of having no male issues. The other case upheld the inheritance of the father's property by her daughter.

The reason Umuada Igbo Nigeria is fighting this customary law is to empower women, widows and the girl child to have access to land, the source of wealth.

Under 5.6C Umuada Igbo Nigeria is holding workshops/lectures in Igbo land ie. South East Nigeria educating girl child to choose marriage under the Marriage Act to avoid being disinherited by customary law on inheritance. We also advise our women to encourage their husbands to write wills so that their widows and children may have a better life because without a valid will, the relations of the man, at his demise, will take all the property of the deceased if he has no surviving male child. Umuada Igbo Nigeria has embarked on advocacy visits to the communities to enlighten women on the Supreme Court judgment. We also give free legal services to oppressed widows to fight for their rights. We now organize other NGOs to persuade the Houses of Assembly of the various states to have legislation in accord with the Supreme Court judgment.

Solutions

Many problems facing women in Igbo land i.e. South East can be addressed through "Radio Programmes". This is a Public Enlightenment Programme to educate and sensitize South East women to their rights of inheritance. Umuada Igbo Nigeria has started sensitizing women and girls to the Supreme Court judgment on inheritance Rights in Igbo Culture.

It will also ensure women's full participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.